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Profile of Eileen McGowan

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Eileen McGowan has over 8 years experience in the satellite industry focusing on market and competitive analysis, forecasting, and regulatory issues. As part of Intelsat's Corporate Strategy and Planning group, Eileen supports multiple internal customers, providing research and analysis to support decision making within the company. Prior to joining Intelsat in late 2007, Eileen spent seven years working at Futron Corporation in Bethesda, MD, first as a market analyst, and eventually as a program manager overseeing both the FCCFilings.com subscription service and the development of the company's annual demand forecast.

An active member of the aerospace community, Eileen is a past president (2006) and Golf Tournament Chair (2007-2008) of Women in Aerospace, and has served as Vice President (2007-2008) and Treasurer (2003-2007) of SSPI's Mid-Atlantic Regional Chapter. In 2006, Eileen received one of the first SSPI Future Leader awards recognizing her contributions to the satellite industry. She holds a Master of Public Policy degree from Georgetown University and a Bachelor of Arts with a concentration in political science and classics from Case Western Reserve University.

1) How did you get started in the satellite business?

Given how much I truly enjoy my work and the satellite industry in general, I wish I could say I had a plan. The truth is that I wound up working for Futron purely by accident. I had spent two years at a small telecom consulting firm in Washington, DC, where I learned about basic telecom infrastructure design and provided analytical and editorial support for project reports. By the end of that time, the company was in financial difficulty, and the writing was on the wall. After my paycheck bounced, I was laughing about it over drinks with some friends when I met a woman who worked at Futron. She told me they were looking for a telecom market analyst, and within a couple months, I had my start at Futron.

2) How have you been involved in changes brought about in or by this business (innovations, technologies, services)?

In the past eight years, I've seen major changes in the way satellite operators do business. Eight or ten years ago, there was an "if you build it, they will come" philosophy that emphasized demand-based forecasting to figure out who and where "they" were. Intelsat was an intergovernmental organization whose signatories did not need to justify new satellites from a return-on-investment perspective. Other operators, caught up in the enthusiasm of the telecom bubble

similarly were less concerned with closing business cases as with chasing what seemed to be limitless growing demand. Today, much of the industry is dominated by investors who require that any satellite they pay for will show certain returns. The result is an emphasis on closing the business case for any new satellite, which has led to a tightening of satellite capacity that shows Eutelsat reporting a fill rate of 97% at the end of 2008 and SES and Intelsat reporting highly utilized capacity as well, at 79% and 83%, respectively. The counter to this trend is seen in the emergence of government-subsidized "pride sats," which are launched by countries more for national pride than for revenue generation. While government-subsidized enterprises operate under different financial constraints from those with investors expecting an ROI, national economics also play a role, and a country may find that it cannot sustain a "pride sat" program beyond the first or second satellite.

3) What do you think was the greatest event/situation/opportunity you experienced? and 4) What was the greatest obstacle?

My greatest obstacle and opportunity go hand-in-hand. Since I spent the beginning of my career as a consultant, I think my greatest obstacle was not having any experience in industry beforehand. Consequently, my greatest opportunity was being offered a position in Intelsat's Corporate Strategy and Planning group, which is like getting an on-the-job MBA. I started out in my comfort zone of forecasting industry demand, and have since moved into working on investment strategies, business planning, and other activities that are more challenging, but also offer me greater insights into how our internal departments interact and how tradeoffs are made among competing interests. I can't emphasize enough how much I truly enjoy what I do.

5) What do you see happening in the next five years in this industry?

It's always dangerous to ask someone who builds forecast models what the next five years will bring. From a demand perspective, we'll see a lot of the same dynamics play out: continued strong demand for video, greater uptake of HD channels, and possibly new models for consumer viewing habits. However, not all of the demand for video will translate into satellite capacity demand - compression technologies and terrestrial networks will dampen the growth curves. Data networks will continue to thrive, and whether innovative concepts like O3b come to fruition, the idea of them will influence the services and pricing offered by existing operators. The availability of capital for investment will also have a major influence on whether innovation will be rewarded or not. Too many people have been burned by the recent economic crisis to invest in unproven markets or technologies, so speculation on such technologies may prove too costly for most. Industry consolidation will likely continue, partially offset by emerging national satellite programs. The risk to the industry will be in rising fill rates and a more conservative approach to launching new capacity. In the event of a catastrophic failure of a GEO satellite, there may not be enough spare capacity on orbit to pick

up the slack. On the launch side, we will soon see what SpaceX can do and what impact it will have on the other launch providers around the globe.

6) What advice do you have for women interested in entering the industry?

One of the best things about my experience in the satellite industry is the utter lack of harassment and discrimination I've seen. As a result, my advice to women interested in entering the industry would probably be the same advice I'd give to men: enjoying what you do is so much more important than money, but don't underestimate what you're worth. Join professional networking groups and meet as many people as you can - you'll never know when they can help you in your career. While working in a small, tight-knit industry has definite advantages, be careful about what you say to whom. And finally, find as many mentors as you can, and make sure they're both men and women. While women who have gone before can give you great advice, none of us would be where we are without the men who mentored women.